

The problem of peace is much broader than the problem of agreeing on the clauses of a treaty to prohibit the use of the atom bomb. It is the problem of establishing sufficient mutual confidence to tackle not only disarmament and the bomb but the whole range of major friction points -- political, strategic and economic -- which are witnesses today of the tragic division between the two worlds.

CANADA AND THE UNITED NATIONS 1946, pp. 29-40

What appears to be the most important accomplishment of the second part of the First Session of the General Assembly was its unanimous adoption on December 14, 1946, of a resolution on the principles governing the general regulation and reduction of armaments. No one expected, when the second part of the First Session opened on October 23, that it would be possible for all the Members of the United Nations to agree, before the end of 1946, to take this first step towards general disarmament. The unexpected ability of the Members of the U.N. to reach unanimous agreement in the Assembly on this step has done much to restore confidence in the ability of the nations to keep the peace and in the value of the United Nations, and especially its Assembly, as an instrument for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Speaking of the action of the Assembly in adopting this resolution, the President of the Assembly, M. Spaak, the Foreign Minister of Belgium, said in his address on the closing day of the session:-

"The decision for which we have voted has raised great hopes. Since San Francisco, since the time when we adopted the Charter, we have accomplished nothing so important as the motion on disarmament. If in the months and weeks to come the competent organs [of the United Nations] really succeed in making the text we have submitted to them a living reality, I think that mankind will have entered a new era, which you have ushered in -- a fact of which you may well be proud."

The passage of a disarmament resolution by a unanimous vote of the Assembly is, as M. Spaak implied, no more than a first step. It is now the responsibility of the Security Council, with the assistance of the Atomic Energy Commission and the Military Staff Committee, to take the second and more difficult step -- to conclude the special agreements putting armed forces at the disposal of the Security Council, and to draw up concrete plans or draft conventions on disarmament for submission to a special session of the General Assembly. It will then be necessary for the Members of the U.N., meeting in special session of the General Assembly, to agree on the texts of the necessary international conventions. Finally, the conventions adopted by the Assembly will have to be ratified by the signatory states before they can come into force and the actual reduction, regulation or prohibition of armaments be accomplished.

Speaking on this point in the General Assembly on December 14, 1946, just before the adoption of the disarmament resolution, the Canadian representative said:-